WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A media receiver comprising:

a media data buffer for receiving media data;

a CPU for decoding said media data; and

a computer-readable storage which contains server selection information for selecting one of a plurality of media servers, said CPU selecting one of said media servers for data communication based upon said server selection information, said receiver establishing a data communication connection with said selected media server, said media data buffer receiving media data from said selected media server, and said CPU decoding said received media data.

2. The media receiver described in Claim 1 wherein said media data includes video data.

3. The media receiver described in Claim 1 wherein said media data includes audio data.

4. The media receiver described in Claim 1 wherein said server selection information includes data relating to the quality of the respective data communication connection that can be established with each of said media servers.

5. The media receiver described in Claim 4 wherein said server selection information includes data relating to the geographic locations of said media servers.

6. The media receiver described in Claim 5 wherein said CPU uses location data representing a location of said media receiving system.

7. The media receiver described in Claim 6 wherein a user of said media receiving system enters said location data representing said location of said media receiving system.

8. The media receiver described in Claim 7 wherein said media data includes video data.

9. A server locator comprising:

a proximate server map stored in a computer-readable storage, said proximate server map containing information related to the geographic location

of a first media server and information related to the geographic location of a second media server; and

a CPU using data representing a third geographic location and said information in said proximate server map to select one of said first or second media servers, said CPU operatively connected to said computer-readable storage.

10. The server locator described in Claim 9, wherein a user of the server locator enters said data representing said third geographic location.

11. A media distribution system comprising:

a plurality of servers at specified geographic locations, each of said servers having a memory for holding media data; and

a receiver at another geographic location, said receiver in communication with one of said servers, said receiver comprising:

a media data buffer for receiving media data from said one of said servers;

a CPU for processing said received media data; and

a computer-readable storage holding information relating to said geographic locations of said servers, said CPU determining which of said servers to establish communication with based upon said information relating to said geographic locations.

12. A method of dynamically allocating a server/receiver pair, said method comprising the steps of:

storing in a receiver, map data indicative of geographic locations of a plurality of servers;

determining a geographic location of said receiver; and

selecting one of said plurality of servers to communicate with, said selecting performed by using said geographic locations of said plurality of servers and said receiver.

13. The method as described in Claim 12, the method comprising the further step of periodically updating said map data.

14. The method as described in Claim 12, the method comprising the further steps of:

storing media clips in said selected server;

requesting one of said media clips; and

transmitting to said receiver data representing said requested media clip.

15. The method as described in Claim 14, the method comprising the further steps of:

storing media data in a central server, said media clips representing a portion of said media data, each of said media clips stored in said selected server based on the frequency at which it is requested.

16. A method of dynamically allocating a server/receiver pair, said method comprising the steps of:

providing data indicating a quality of each of a plurality of communication links, each of said communication links relating to a receiver and one of a plurality of servers; and

selecting one of said servers to communicate with said receiver based upon determining a communication link to have a highest quality.

17. The method as described in Claim 16, wherein said server communicates audio data and said receiver comprises a standard PC.

18. A media communication system comprising:

a proximate server capable of communicating with a media server and with a PC, said media server including a computer-readable storage containing a set of media data; and

a data packet including a request message transmitted from said PC to said proximate server, said request message indicating a request for data included in said set of media data, said proximate server responding to said request message to issue a request to said media server for data in said set of media data, said proximate server receiving a portion of said data in said set of media data, and said proximate server transmitting said portion of said data to said PC.

19. The media communication system as described in Claim 18, wherein said proximate server sends said portion of said data to said PC before said proximate server receives all of said data in said set of media data.

20. The media communication system as described in Claim 19, wherein said portion of said data in said set of media data includes audio data.

21. The media communication system as described in Claim 19, wherein said portion of said data in said set of media data includes video data.

22. A method of dynamically allocating server/receiver pairs in an audio-on-demand system comprising the steps of:

establishing communication between a receiver and a central server;

identifying to said central server a location of said receiver;

identifying to said central server a location of at least one proximate server; and

wherein said central server establishes communication between said receiver and a proximate server based upon said location of said receiver and a location of said proximate server.

23. A media communication system comprising:

a media server capable of communicating with a PC, said media server including a computer-readable storage;

a proximate server geography map stored in said computer-readable storage; and

a data packet including information corresponding to a geographic location of said PC, said media server accessing said proximate server geography map and using said geography map and said geographic location of said PC to determine a proximate server closest to said PC.

24. The media communication system described in Claim 23, wherein said information corresponding to said geographic location of said PC is a telephone number.

25. The media communication system as described in Claim 24, wherein said media server assigns said determined proximate server to said PC for future data communication.

26. The media communication system as described in Claim 23, wherein said media server provides audio data for real-time playback, said media communication system further comprising:

a plurality of compressed audio data clips stored in said computer-readable storage; and

a PC comprising:

a buffer memory which receives compressed audio data as input and stores said compressed audio data;

a CPU which communicates with said buffer memory and which controls input of data to and output of data from said buffer memory, and wherein said CPU further decompresses audio data output from said buffer memory;

an audio driver circuit which receives decompressed audio data inputs from said decompressor; and

an audio speaker or other audio transducer which plays said decompressed audio data provided by said audio driver; and

wherein said standard PC initiates audio requests, receives audio data transmitted from said media server, and plays back said audio data in real-time.

27. The media communication system as described in Claim 26, wherein said media communication system transmits flow control information comprising:

a plurality of stop markers; and

a plurality of acknowledge markers different from said stop markers and interleaved between said stop markers, the interval between each acknowledge marker and the next stop marker being related to the time it takes to transmit data from a first location to a second location.

28. The media communication system as described in Claim 26, wherein said media server has a table of contents memory containing table of contents data associated with a corresponding audio data clip, and wherein said table of contents data indicates significant divisions within said corresponding audio data clip; and wherein said PC further comprises:

a table of contents buffer for receiving said table of contents data;

an advance audio data buffer which contains audio data corresponding to audio data at said significant divisions in said audio data; and

a display screen for displaying said table of contents.

29. A system for requesting and receiving a data file over a computer network, the system comprising:

first and second servers connected to a computer network;

a subscriber PC connected to said computer network;

server selection apparatus for selecting one of said first or second servers, said server selection apparatus comprising:

quality data related to a quality of communication links between said subscriber PC and each of said first and second servers; and

selection instructions for selecting a server based on said quality data;

media data transmission apparatus for transmitting data from said first server to said subscriber PC, said media data transmission apparatus comprising a net transport and flow control signals.

add a3?
add b5?
Add C?
Add E2?